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INTRODUCTION

THE Mapuche occupy an area in southern central Chile between the Pacific Ocean and the Andes Mountains, an area roughly the size of the state of Delaware, and have an estimated population of just under 250,000. The region in which they live is called *Araucanía* or *La Frontera* and, in terms of settlement, is composed of about 2,000 small Mapuche reservations, numerous Chilean farms, and a few towns and cities. While the reservations form large blocks in this area, they are broken into various by Chilean holdings, as indicated on the line map, the area of the most dense Mapuche occupation.

The Mapuche constitute one of the largest functioning indigenous societies in South America and are quite distinctive culturally and socially from Chileans. Their history has involved armed warfare, land usurpation, and, more recently, the dissolution of many reservation communities under pressure exerted by Chilean colonists. For centuries the Mapuche have lost territory to Chilean settlers. They were defeated in the Rebellion of 1880-82, and their political-military organization was undermined. They no longer roam over a vast territory, raiding whites and other Mapuche. They have been immobilized on small reservations, and are dependent on field agriculture. In spite of these socially disruptive forces, the Mapuche have maintained a great measure of cultural and social integrity. These forces have not caused traditional Mapuche life to disappear; rather their effect has been to weld Mapuche society into a more complex structure than existed in pre-reservation times.

Having withstood more than four hundred years of persistent efforts at colonization and assimilation, the Mapuche, understandably, have experienced cultural and social change. They have undergone emotional readaptation and reintegration during their four centuries of contact with whites. They now form a vigorous and, because of a growing political awareness, a

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sometimes vociferous component of the Chilean population—a regional, ethnically-conscious minority. Since 1884 the Chilean government has introduced a series of changes in reservation law to the end of encouraging the Mapuche to give up their traditional way of life and become integrated into Chilean regional society as small farmers and rural laborers. Its efforts have been to little or no avail. In December 1960, the Chilean Congress passed a law designed to abolish the reservation system and allow for a period of grace during which the Mapuche may take stock of their new legal situation and make appropriate adjustments to the changed legal framework under which they must live. It remains to be seen what the eventual effects of this change in legal status may be. If some concession is made to Mapuche technological backwardness, if they are not strangled by tax laws and credit structures and do not lose their land through liens, forced sales, etc., it is reasonable to assume that they will endure as a functioning indigenous society for some decades to come, until their gradual amalgamation with Chilean regional society.

Meanwhile, because of the reservation system of 1884, they are virtually roped off from Chileans acquisitive of their land. Their social and cultural systems are rooted in an agricultural economy. They constitute a nation of small-scale and technologically anachronous dirt farmers. Their stabilization on small family-based reservations for a number of generations has seen the emergence of socially significant patrilineages, the weft of their social fabric being a distinctive system of lineage-based matrilateral alliance and ritual congregationalism which together constitute the sustaining fibre of Mapuche morality.

This book attempts to plumb what is so often called "cultural consciousness" or "cultural nationalism." There is an undeniable ethnic and cultural integrity observable among the Mapuche. The Mapuche are distinctive, strange. Their strangeness is most apparent in their public and private ritual. On further inspection, this strangeness comes through in a hundred different ways related to supernatural beliefs and associated activities. It is best understood at the local level of analysis, the reservation level of Mapuche society. Ritual performances—*awn, nillatun, machitun, kalkutun* (see below)—bind together

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machi might be filled by a man or a woman" (1951:117). There are a number of sources on the Mapuche, a few of which appear in Titiev's bibliography, which could be cited to throw doubt on this statement. However, going far back, Ovalle (1646) tells us that there were female *machi* in the seventeenth century, and the *Actas del Cabildo de Santiago* attest to their existence in the sixteenth century, as well. The greatest problem involved in judgments of this sort made by Cooper and Titiev seems to be related to an impatience with the historical record.

According to the best documented sources dealing with the events of relatively recent history, such as the works of Moesbach and Félix José de Augusta, we know that there were many female *machi* practicing around the end of the last century, and that the methods of supernatural curing were pretty much as they are today. Female *machi* are not distinguished from males except for the latter's role in forecasting the outcome of military activities. It is possible that when peace was established the male *machi* lost stature among their followers (although this seems undiscoverable from the written records) either because they were felt to have lost power or because there was no longer a need for their costly services. Whether or not this was the case seems undiscoverable from the sources, or from the learned discourses presumably based on the sources, and to build anything on this kind of guess is methodologically unsound. We are left, however, with a consideration of power and its inheritance, which takes us to a consideration of the *machi*'s position with respect to patrilineal descent groups and the system of matrilateral marriage—regardless of the sex of the shaman.

Shamanistic power is not inherited from one's father or mother or from other close relatives. It is not inherited at all, in the sense of being transmitted to someone because of his position in some kind of descent group, however conceived. A male shaman might instruct his son to become adept in shamanistic theatrics (although I cannot give eye-witness proof of this information), but supernatural power is never passed along from one living person to another. It is also doubtful if a male shaman has familiar spirits, which is perfectly consistent with the morality structure of a patrilineal system. Female shamans do have familiar spirits from whom they receive power;